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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study that examined effective administrators of schools for the visual and performing arts with respect to personality characteristics, leadership style, and administrative context are presented in this paper. Questionnaires mailed to 36 administrators of schools for the visual and performing arts in the United States and Canada were returned by 17 respondents. Findings indicate that the combination of artistic interest with democratic leadership styles creates a harmonious administrator/staff relationship. Administrators also possess skills crucial for fundraising and recruitment activities, which are unique to their schools. A conclusion is that administrators match personal with school needs. The appendix contains selected items (7), and the 57-item survey instrument. (26 references) (LMI)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS AND THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midsouth Educational Research Association, November, 1991, Lexington, Kentucky

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Characteristics of Effective School Leaders and Their Administrative Context

Administrators of schools for the visual and performing arts are leaders in unique educational settings. For the most part, the faculty are outspoken, intense, intuitive artists who have made a living in the arts outside of academia (Clark & Zimmerman, 1984; Richards & Gipe, 1989). They are internally directed, motivated, responsible, and devoted to their craft. They also hold strong beliefs about their autonomy and articulate their need for independence and individuality (Richards & Gipe, 1989). Unlike their classroom counterparts, few artist/teachers have studied teaching methods. Yet, they have a reputation for teaching excellence (Carpenter, 1987; Gear, 1984; Richards & Gipe, 1989).

Because the curriculum is devoted to the arts, the philosophy, goals and operating procedures of these schools may vary from other schools within the governing system. Consequently, certain policies and administrative decisions may be misunderstood and critically questioned by parents, other school leaders and the school system's administrative hierarchy. For example, since the audition process to enter schools for the visual and performing arts is based more upon international than local criteria, only 30% of students who apply may be selected. And, since students are usually on continual probation in their arts department and are also expected to maintain high grades in academic subjects, the attrition rate is high (Gear, 1984). Those who consider the arts an avocational pursuit have difficulty understanding the reasons for such high expectations and standards.

Another important difference is that although usually part of a larger public school system, schools for the visual and performing arts have choice over student selection which insures a student body of high calibre. Yet, they must also depend upon recruiting and admitting a sufficient quantity of participants and soliciting funds from outside sources for survival. Fund raising, public relations and student recruitment tend to be important and time-consuming functions of the school administrator (Carlson, 1984; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1982).

Because schools for the visual and performing arts differ from the norm, it is possible that effective administrators of these schools may also be unique with respect to their suitedness for the position. Specifically, administrators of schools for the visual and performing arts may possess certain personality characteristics and exhibit leadership styles which are particularly appropriate for the unusual situational context of their leadership position. It is well-recognized that "different types of leaders perform well in different types of situations" (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974, p. 63). Additionally, newer leadership theories strongly suggest that what makes a leader effective are the links between the leader's personal traits and the variables surrounding the leadership environment (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974; House, 1971; Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Weed, Mitchell & Moffitt, 1976).

Personality Traits, Leadership Styles and the Situational Context of Effective Leadership

Until the 1950s, the personality or trait approach to leadership dominated leadership research. It is now acknowledged that "no single personality trait or trait pattern . . . assures good leadership in all situations" (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974, p. 73).

Effective leadership studies prove that the same leaders placed in different leadership positions perform differently according to the nature of the task. "Persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations" (Stogdill, 1974, p. 64).

Newer leadership studies do demonstrate however, that certain personality traits, determined both by heredity and environment, relate to effective managerial aspects of leadership performance (i.e., certain activities related to leadership, such as writing memorandums and reports and organizing work schedules). More successful managers are cheerful, desire to compete with peers, respect authority figures, are socially ascendent, dependable, alert, open-minded, dominant, bold, considerate, self-confident, intelligent, persistent, verbal, aggressive, extroverted, can see causes of actions which are not readily apparent to others, are self-assured, people-oriented, individualistic, persuasive, possess social skills, initiative, a tolerance for stress, have verbal interests, high energy, are not excessively modest, desire power and profess a dislike for exclusively scientific, technical or skilled occupations (Hoy & Miskel, 1984; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1982; Stogdill, 1974).

"In essence, leadership style is a personality characteristic" (Hoy & Miskel, 1982, p. 236). Leadership style is defined as an "underlying need structure . . . that motivates behavior in various [leadership] situations" (Fiedler, 1967, p. 36). A leader's behavior (e.g., acts such as chastising or commending), may change predictably depending upon the leader's personality and the degree of control or influence he or she has over the leadership situation. But, the need structure, which to a great extent is deeply-rooted in

early parent/child relationships, and which motivates these behaviors, is a constant (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1970; Baker & Lewin, 1940; Lester, 1975).

Most psychologists agree that although experiences certainly play a part, an administrator's dominant leadership style is usually determined by early adolescence and is governed "by the values and beliefs . . . [held] about the 'best' way to treat people" (Lester, 1975, p. 8). Although administrators may not fall neatly into a category, essentially there are two main modes or styles of leadership: autocratic/task oriented and democratic/relationship oriented (Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939). Autocratic leaders like to concentrate on tasks, closely supervise subordinates, determine all policies and make all decisions. In contrast, democratic leaders are particularly concerned with developing good relationships with subordinates and encourage them to participate in decision-making and management responsibilities. They promote shared authority and group cohesiveness. Under extremely favorable leadership conditions, both types of leaders can focus on secondary goals because their primary goals are being met. That is, autocratic leaders can focus on developing relationships with subordinates and democratic leaders can attend to task completion. In stressful leadership situations, both types of leaders understandably become more rigid in their primary goal needs.

Each type of leader is most effective under different leadership situations. Subordinates who are themselves authoritarian, with a low need for independence, perform best with autocratic/task-oriented leaders, especially under highly favorable or highly unfavorable conditions. Subordinates who are professionally able, high in the

need for independence and low in authoritarianism (e.g., artist teachers), perform best with democratic/relationship-oriented leaders, especially if no serious problems arise. Thus, subordinates and their leaders are most satisfied with each other when they possess correspondingly similar need structures. Furthermore, "the authoritarian or democratic values of group members strongly affect the type of leader who is likely to emerge" (Fiedler & Chermers, 1974, p. 31).

Social psychologists have long realized the importance of both personality variables and the environment in the explanation of behavior. Similarly, contemporary leadership theories now explain that besides personality and leadership style, the situational context of the administrative position is crucial for understanding effective leadership. For example, the well-known contingency model of leadership defines leader effectiveness in terms of how well the group accomplishes its tasks and postulates that group effectiveness is a joint function of the leader's style and the situation's variables, which include the extent to which:

1. the position enables the leader to get subordinates to comply with directives
2. group tasks can be clearly specified and verified
3. the leader is accepted and respected by group members
4. superiors give authority to the leader (Fiedler, 1964)

The more recent path-goal theory, limitedly tested in educational settings, defines leader effectiveness in terms of the personal characteristics or psychological states of subordinates (e.g., their locus of control and how they perceive their professional competence) and the specific demands of the job (House, 1971). Both theories of

leadership demonstrate that "an adequate analysis of leadership involves not only a study of leaders but also of situations" (Stogdill, 1974, p. 64).

Rationale

The following research, guided by tenets of these two contemporary models of leadership, examines effective administrators of schools for the visual and performing arts with respect to personality characteristics, leadership style and administrative context. The study was conducted because a growing research base indicates that the administrator is the key variable to school effectiveness (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Rossow, 1990). Yet "little attention has been given to the relationship between leadership and school context variables" (Blase, 1987, p. 589). Results of the investigation may help to identify the "requirements for success as a principal in a particular type school situation" (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1982, p. 5) and may give recognition to the importance of particular leadership talents and personal characteristics of administrators of unusual schools, such as schools for the visual and performing arts.

Methodology

Thirty-six administrators of schools for the visual and performing arts in the United States and Canada, chosen to participate in the study because of their reputation as effective leaders, agreed to participate in the study. Seventeen administrators completed the study, which is considered an above average response rate (Kerlinger, 1973). The subjects completed a, 1) researcher-devised questionnaire designed to elicit demographic information and self-opinions regarding their administrative beliefs and behaviors (e.g., attitude toward their job, perceived influence with superiors and subordinates and perceived leadership style), 2) Rotter's Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement (1966), which examines the degree to which individuals believe they are internally directed and have influence over their life, 3) the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form F (1976), which measures dichotomous personality characteristics of introvert/extrovert, sensate/intuitive, thinking/feeling and judging/perceiving, 4) the expanded version of the Strong Interest Inventory (Strong, Hansen & Campbell, 1985), which compares individuals' preferences, interests and administrative styles to others who are successful in a particular field or profession and, 5) the Least Preferred Co-Worker Survey (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974), designed to evaluate individuals' primary goals or need structures of accomplishing tasks or promoting and maintaining effective relationships. (See Appendix A for a fuller description of these five instruments).

Because of the limited, albeit select, number of subjects, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis (Shavelson, 1981) was considered the most appropriate

procedure to survey patterns of responses on the researcher-devised questionnaire. Data from the Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement (Rotter, 1966) and the Least Preferred Co-Worker Survey (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974) were analyzed by descriptive statistics. Data from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (1976) were categorized according to Jung's (1971) descriptions of basic personality types (introvert/extrovert, sensing/intuitive, thinking/feeling, judging/perceiving). Data from the expanded version of the Strong Interest Inventory (Strong, Hansen & Campbell,1985) were compared to national and international norms.

Results

The results of the study reveal diversity only in the subjects' responses to certain demographic questions. For example, their ages range from thirty-nine to sixty-five years. The amount of time each administrator has served in his or her present position ranges from one to twenty-two years and the number of teachers supervised by these leaders ranges from twelve to one hundred eighty. The number of students matriculating in their schools ranges from one hundred to eleven hundred. The self-reported number of hours each administrator works ranges from forty to eighty per week. (See Appendix B.) Not surprisingly, there is a high correlation between the number of students these administrators supervise and the number of hours they work per week ($r = .7475$, $p = .001$). There is a negative correlation between the number of hours worked per week and satisfaction with their job ($r = -.3455$).

As a group, these administrators agree that they spend a large portion of their professional day on school management concerns and rank consulting with artist/teachers

as their number one priority. Surprisingly, they spend little time filling out forms or meeting with parents, students or supervisors. For the most part they are very satisfied with their jobs (M = 3.41 out of a 4 point scale) and rate their position as providing self-fulfillment first, followed by opportunities for independent thought and action and helping others. They do not consider prestige or job security important considerations.

The majority believe that their decisions are supported by their superiors (M = 3.12 out of a 4 point scale). As democratic leaders, they determine some faculty policies, but give artist/teachers considerable freedom to determine their own policies and teaching methods. They admire originality, are frequently spontaneous, somewhat orderly and consider themselves to be creative. They report that they only occasionally must act as a buffer between their faculty and superiors and believe that their subordinates and superiors only occasionally make conflicting demands on them. They also believe that administrators of other schools usually underestimate their administrative problems and that their superiors more than occasionally underestimate the administrative demands placed upon them. Unlike artist/teachers and other highly creative individuals, these administrators report that they do not easily tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, but prefer closure. They report that they are somewhat cautious, although they encourage freedom of expression in others. They understandably dislike paper work, firing people, reprimanding teachers, completing the payroll, general clerical work, too many demands on time and energy, and dealing with trivial matters.

As a group these administrators are much more internally directed than their subordinates (See Richards & Gipe, 1989). They strongly believe that there is a causal

relationship between their behavior and their success and achievements. They describe their least preferred co-worker as unfriendly, cold, guarded, tense, distant, extremely frustrating, not very supportive, uncooperative and very efficient.

Extroversion/introversion and judging/perceiving tendencies are equally distributed throughout the population. However, all seventeen of these administrators report a preference for making decisions by using their analytic thinking abilities rather than their feelings, and 15 out of 17 are sensate rather than intuitive (i.e., concerned with the present rather than future-oriented). They are drawn to professions associated with the arts, and also share strong interests associated with individuals in artistic professions. They are also investigative and/or social in nature; that is, they are generous, idealistic, cooperative, and prefer positions where they can offer ideas to others (Strong, Hansen & Campbell, 1985).

Profile of the Effective Arts School Administrator

Upon examining and interpreting the study's results, the following profile of an effective arts school administrator emerged. As a democratic leader, the effective arts school administrator prefers subordinates who are supportive, cooperative, friendly and close. According to individual creative abilities, he/she could be happy working as a writer, composer, lyricist, designer, journalist, critic or visual artist. Being artistic in nature, he/she possesses many of the psychological characteristics associated with creative individuals. Artistic people are creative, expressive and spontaneous. They enjoy tasks that allow them to rely on their verbal and visual skills. Artistic individuals like freedom and spontaneity, and occasionally feel stifled by a great deal of structure, rules or regular

hours. They prefer to work on projects in spurts, often late at night or early in the morning. They are most productive in a flexible environment.

Artistic leaders tend to flaunt tradition and contribute originality to their organization. They are able to communicate well and have the ability to excite others about their organization. Artistic leaders may need to learn how to organize and plan and follow through on details. They prefer not to manage others in the traditional sense. They tend to believe that their subordinates can manage themselves. This characteristic can cause subordinates desiring structure to feel uneasy. Artistic leaders also resist assignments that do not excite them. Therefore, they are willing to delegate routine activities to others (Strong, Hansen & Campbell, 1985).

Like the majority of school administrators studied according to Jungian typology (Brightman, 1984), the effective arts school administrator analyzes and weighs facts carefully and depends upon senses rather than intuition to determine what is actually there and actually happening. He/she considers consequences of alternative solutions, faces facts squarely, is realistic and tries to face realities by disregarding sentiment. He/she organizes, tries to find flaws in advance, adheres to policy, can fire people when necessary and stands firm against opposition. He/she notices what needs attention and keeps track of essential details, is resourceful, practical, likes to organize and run activities, and enjoys new and challenging problems.

Extroverted/thinking arts school administrators differ slightly from introverted/thinking arts school administrators. Extroverted/thinking types aim to govern their own conduct and other people's conduct in accordance with thought-out

conclusions. They dislike confusion, inefficiency and ineffectiveness. They enjoy being and executive and work hard to achieve that position. Introverted thinkers use their thinking to analyze the world, not to run it. They are inwardly absorbed in a current analysis of any given problem. They are perceived as analytical, impersonal, outwardly quiet and reserved (Briggs & Myers, 1974).

As investigative people, the effective arts school administrator is curious, independent, introspective, intellectual and enjoys problem solving by seeking creative solutions. He/she is not overly interested in controlling others but prefers to work in unstructured, flexible organizations that permit maximum self-expression where he/she can pursue creative endeavors. Because of a need for independence and creativity, investigative leaders may not accept direction readily and may give insufficient structure to the work situation as well as insufficient guidance and attention to the staff especially when difficult situations arise. Administrators with investigative tendencies are likely to be found in leadership positions associated with artistic endeavors such as museums, galleries, libraries, media organizations, advertising agencies or up-scale fashion merchandising. Investigative leaders prefer a quiet, laid-back management style. They are strong, dominant and low-key and they may need to develop greater negotiating skills. Artistic/investigative leaders prefer positions where they can offer ideas. They sometimes fail to understand the need for accountability.

As social individuals, the effective arts school administrator is generous, idealistic and cooperative. He/she seeks to help people improve themselves and solve their individual problems. He/she is very successful at managing "hard to manage"

subordinates, such as creative individuals (Strong, Hansen & Campbell, 1985). He/ she is able to listen well and can understand the needs of others and prefers to deal with people on a personal, intimate basis. As a social leader he/she uses interpersonal skills to reduce conflict and to help others work together. He/she enjoys interaction, has a strong need to be accepted, and is good at teaching. Occasionally, he/she may be viewed as unbusiness-like and more concerned with people rather than tasks. He/she may tend to experience burn-out because of working so hard and staying long hours on the job.

Discussion and Implications

The administrators who participated in this study seem to be extremely well-suited for their positions. Not only do their own personal characteristics of high artistic interest and creativity make for a harmonious match, but these administrators' democratic leadership styles are particularly important considering the nature of their artist/teacher faculty who have a strong need for independence, individuality, and freedom in determining policy and teaching methods. These administrators believe their employees can manage themselves. Additionally, since schools of the visual and performing arts are different from traditional schools in their unique need to recruit students and raise funds, these administrators are also an excellent match to this environment as they communicate well and have the ability to excite others about their organization, important characteristics for fund raising and recruitment activities.

Perhaps administrators of schools of visual and performing arts gravitated toward their positions because of their particular interest in the arts, and/or because of the democratic values held by artist/teachers. Nonetheless, they do represent a match that

not only suits their personal needs, but also the needs of their faculty and the context of the situation. This concept of a harmonious match does not need to be unique to schools of the visual and performing arts, however, Those who recruit and review applications for administrative positions must keep in mind the specialties/uniqueness of their schools for which the administrator is being hired. As this study has shown, it is not only the personal needs of the administrator that should be met, but also the specific needs of the faculty and the specific contextual needs of the school and the community in which it lives. Advertisements for such positions should be quite specific about all of these aspects.

In summary, administrators of schools of the visual and performing arts should be given merit for the job they do. In addition to the usual administrative chores, these administrators must recruit, raise funds and perform other public relations tasks. They should be recognized for their uniqueness.

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Appendix A

Researcher-Devised Questionnaire

The researcher-devised questionnaire contained fifty-seven questions designed to elicit demographic information (e.g., number of years in present administrative position), and respondents' perceptions regarding their supervisory beliefs and behaviors (e.g., attitude toward their job, perceived influence with superiors and subordinates and perceived leadership style). Representative items are:

#1. I know that my decisions will be supported by my supervisors.

#4. I encourage artist/teachers to determine their own policies.

#18. Artist/teachers do not realize how difficult it is to be an administrator of an arts school.

'#23. I can tolerate ambiguity.

#32. I maintain social distance from my staff.

#33. I like my supervisory work.

#37. I admire originality.

Respondents rated the items by circling numbers following each statement which most corresponded to their opinion (1 = not at all; 2 = some; 3 = frequently; 4 = almost always).

Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement (Rotter, 1966)

Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement (Rotter, 1966) measures the construct of locus of control. Locus of control indicates individuals' beliefs about "the relationship between one's own behavior and its consequences" (Rotter, 1966, p. 2). Persons with a high internal locus of control score generally believe that they are able to make decisions which affect outcomes. Conversely, persons with a high external locus of control score generally believe that outside forces such as fate, luck or chance determine outcomes.

This instrument consists of 29 forced-choice items. Rotter (1966) reports moderate to good reliability and validity coefficients ranging from .49 to .83.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form F (Briggs & Myers, 1976)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form F, (Briggs & Myers, 1976) measures 4 personality factors based upon the dichotomies of extrovert/introvert, sensing/intuitive, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving. The theoretical foundation of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is Jung's (1971) theory of type. This instrument provides information about individuals' styles of information gathering and decision-making (i.e., how persons become aware of things, people, happenings, and ideas, and all of the ways persons come to conclusions about what has been perceived).

The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Mitchell, 1985) reports that validity is moderate based upon statistically significant correlations with similar tests, and that

reliability is good based on correlation coefficients of .87.

Strong Interest Inventory (Strong, Hansen & Campbell, 1985)

The Strong Interest Inventory is a widely used psychological survey. The questions on this instrument are designed to measure an individual's occupational and general interests and leadership management style by comparing his/her responses to others who are successful in various professions and occupations. Information includes, 1) vocational interests (i.e., realistic and preferring hands-on activities; investigative and preferring abstract problem solving activities; artistic and concerned with creative endeavors; social and concerned with the welfare of others; enterprising and persuasive; and conventional and preferring orderly activities and well-defined tasks), 2) general interests, such as adventure, agriculture, art, mathematics, teaching and writing, 3) occupational interests (e.g., psychologist, author, artist, navy or army officer, architect, plumber, administrator), 4) management style (i.e., willingness to delegate routine tasks and allowing freedom in work styles or preferring to make all decisions) and, 5) preferences for leisure activities, such as drama, music, gardening, working with machines, skiing, fishing, hiking or collecting stamps. This instrument is reported to have few flaws, which a reliability ranging from .64 to .91 and high construct, concurrent and predictive validity.

The Least Preferred Coworker Survey (LPC) (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974)

The LPC Survey was designed to measure the motivation or behavioral preferences of leaders with regards to the goals of task completion or promoting member relations. The LPC instrument requires individuals to rate the one person with whom he/she can work least well (i.e., the least preferred co-worker). According to Fiedler and Chemers (1974), a high LPC person perceives his least preferred co-worker in a favorable manner and has as his or her basic goal a desire to be related to others. Conversely, a low LPC person perceives his or her co-worker in an unfavorable manner and has as his or her basic goal the desire to complete tasks. In general, subordinates view a "high LPC leader as considerate, human relations oriented, participative in management style and sensitive to the feelings of others. Subordinates view low LPC leaders as more directive, goal-oriented and more concerned with efficiency. The LPC survey is reported to have a high internal consistency with split-half reliability in the .90 to .95 range. However, test-re-test reliability is inconsistent depending upon age, maturity, further life experiences of respondents and length of time between test situations.